

Opening of the Far East

For each of the following eight document passages,
provide a brief summary and identify
the nationality of the speaker.
Include a rationale as to why you chose
that particular country.

Document #1 (early nineteenth century)

People from all over the world refer to Japan as the land of the Gods, and call us the descendents of the gods.

Indeed it is exactly as they say: our country, as a special mark of favor from the heavenly gods, was begotten

by them, and thus so immense a difference between Japan and all the other countries in the world as to

defy comparison. Ours is a splendid and blessed country, the Land of the Gods beyond any doubt, and we,

down to the most humble man and woman, are the descendants of the gods . . .

Japanese differ completely

from and are superior to the people of China, India, Russia, Holland, Siam, Cambodia, and all other countries,

and for us to have called our country the land of the Gods was not mere vainglory.

Summary:

Nationality:

Document #2 (late sixteenth century)

When the Portugalls came to Guangzhou in China to trafficke they must remain there but certain days. And when they

come in at the gate of the city they must enter their names in a booke, and when they go out at night they must put out

their names. They may not lie in the towne all night, but must lie in their boates without the towne. The Chinians are

very suspicious and do not trust strangers.

Summary:

Nationality/

Document #3 (1755)

The products of China are abundant; what need have we for the small and insignificant goods of the distant barbarians?

Just because you wanted to trade we have had compassion for men from afar and did not prohibit you from

coming. Now you are not able to keep your place and obey the laws . . . The laws will be upheld and feelings will be

pacified. Everyone will return to harmonious cooperation.

Summary:

Nationality/

Document #4 (1841)

The position of women in Japan is apparently unlike that of the sex in all other parts of the East, and approaches

more nearly their European condition. The Japanese women are subjected to no jealous seclusion, hold a fair

station in society, and share in all the innocent recreations of their fathers and husbands. The minds of the women

are cultivated with as much care as those of men; and amongst the most admired Japanese historians, moralists,

and poets are found several female names. But, though permitted thus to enjoy and adorn society, they are, on the

other hand, during their whole lives, kept in a state of tutelage; that is, of complete dependence on their husbands,

sons, or other relatives. They have no legal rights, and their evidence is not admitted in a court of justice. Not only

may the husband introduce as many unwedded helpmates into the mansion over which his wife presides, but he

also has the power of divorce, which may be considered unlimited . . . At home, the wife is the mistress of the family;

but in other respects she is treated rather as a toy for her husband's amusement, than as the rational, confidential

partner of his life. She is, indeed, kept in profound ignorance of his business affairs; and so much as a

question from her in relation to them would be resented as an act of unpardonable presumption.

Summary:

Nationality/

Document #5 (eighteenth century)

The men of the countries of Europe sail at will around the globe in ships which recognize no frontiers. In Holland, one of the countries of Europe, they consider astronomy and geography to be the most important subjects of study because unless a ship's captain is well versed in these sciences, it is impossible for him to sail as he chooses to all parts of the world. Moreover, the Dutch have the excellent national characteristics of investigating matters with great patience until they can get to the very bottom. For the sake of such research, they have devised surveying instruments as well as telescopes and helioscopes with which to examine the sun, moon, and stars.

Summary:

Nationality/

Document #6 (late sixteenth century)

Tian-zhu Guo (Catholic state, presumably Italy) lies farther to the west from the Buddhist state (India). Their people understand literature and are as scholarly and elegant as the Chinese. A certain Li-ma-tou (Matthew Ricci) came from the said state and after four years reached the boundary of Guangdong by way of India. Their religion worships Tianzhu (Lord of Heaven) just as Confucianists worship Confucius and Buddhists Buddha . . . I am very much delighted with his (Ricci's) ideas, which are close to Confucianism but more earnest in exhorting society not to resemble the Buddhists, who always like to use obscure, incoherent words to fool and frighten the populace . . . He is very polite when he talks to people and his arguments, if challenged, can be inexhaustible. Thus in foreign countries there are also real gentlemen.

Summary:

Nationality/

Document #7 (1857–58)

It is impossible that our merchants and missionaries can course up and down the inland waters of this great region and traffic in their cities and preach in their villages without wearing away at the curst of the Chinaman's stoical and skeptical conceit. The whole present system in China is a hollow thing, with a hard brittle surface . . . Some day a

happy blow will shiver it, and it will all go together.

Summary:

Nationality/

Document #8 (1857–58)

It is monstrous in barbarians to attempt to improve the inhabitants of the Celestial Empire when they are so miserably deficient themselves. Thus, introducing a poisonous drug for their own benefit and to the injury of others, they are deficient in benevolence. Sending their fleets and armies to rob other nations, they can make no pretense to rectitude . . .

How can they expect to renovate others? They allow the rich and noble to enter office without passing through any literary examinations, and do not open the road to advancement to the poorest and meanest in the land. From this it appears that foreigners are inferior to the Chinese and therefore must be unfit to instruct them.

Summary:

Nationality/